

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 21

## CONVERSATION STARTER

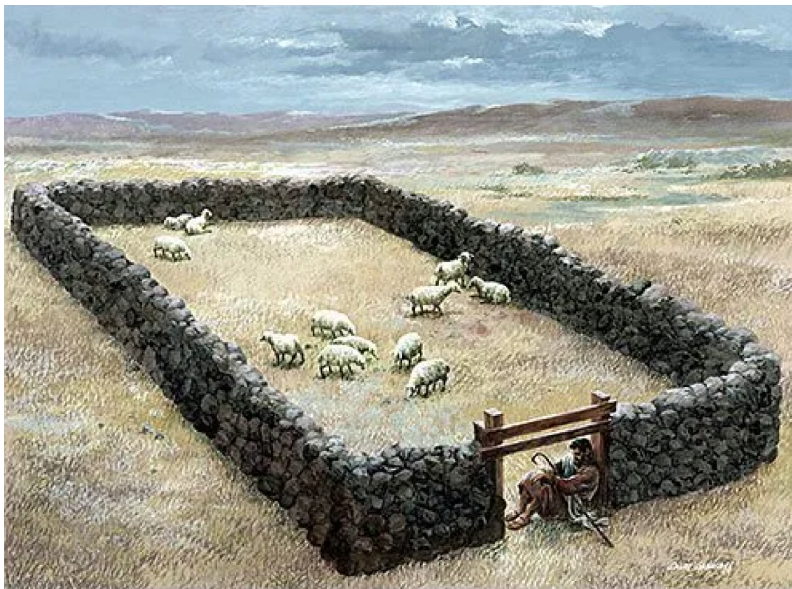
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If you could be any one animal for 24 hours, which animal would you want to be and why?

## JESUS: THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

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In Jesus' day, sheep were gathered each night into big pens where multiple flocks were kept together. These pens would have only one entrance. And this "door," as it was called, is where the shepherd would lay down to ensure no sheep escaped the pen and no predators snuck in.



At the end of John 9, we read about how the Pharisees, angry at the formerly blind man for not renouncing Jesus or calling him a sinner, cast him out of the synagogue. In this way, they acted as the door, cutting this man off from his ability to access and worship God. Rather than celebrate the healing of one of God's sheep, they took advantage of their authority over the sheep in ways that benefitted themselves, regardless of what it meant for the flock. They made themselves gatekeepers, capable of deciding who was in and who was out.

When Jesus hears about this, he tells these religious leaders “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” Jesus says I am the one who sits at the entrance and guards the flock, the one who determines who gets in and who doesn’t. No one else has that authority.

But it doesn’t stop there. The Shepherd who guarded the entrance to the door would also inspect the sheep as they enter, looking for any wounds and ensuring that each and every sheep was accounted for. Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd; he says he knows each of his sheep. He cares for them, binds up their wounds, and seeks out any who are lost. Jesus loves his sheep so much that he is willing to lay down his life to protect them. Unlike the religious leaders at the time, who only cared for themselves, Jesus’ primary concern is for his flock.

*Take a few moments to consider this together as a group: What are the ways we are guilty of acting like the religious leaders and potentially blocking or limiting people’s access to Jesus, albeit intentionally or unintentionally?*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Jesus says his sheep recognize his voice and follow him. Whose voice do you listen to? In other words, who are you following? Who are you allowing to shape and influence the person you are becoming?
3. Read Ezekiel 34:1-34 together. What separates a good leader from a bad leader according to this passage? What are some of the defining characteristics of good leaders and bad leaders?
4. Think about the people you lead—remember, *everyone* is leading someone, whether you’re doing it intentionally or unintentionally. How does Jesus’ example of leadership change the way you seek to lead those under your care?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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Read through Psalm 23 below once from start to finish. Then, read it a second time, thinking about what it means for Jesus to be the Good Shepherd for you personally. What thoughts, feelings, or questions arise for you as you read? Finally, read the psalm through one more time, but this time, use it as a guide to offer a prayer back to God. Change the language to first person and add thoughts or concerns of yours that may come up. Summarize each verse as if you were talking directly with God.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.